



City of Seattle

Greg Nichols, Mayor
Department of Planning and Development
Diane Sugimura, Director

**CITY OF SEATTLE
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Application Number: 2203519
Application Name: Ariel Development
Address of Proposal: 1046 First Avenue South

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Master Use Permit for future construction of a nine-story, 169,000 sq. ft. hotel building with a 5,250 sq. ft. restaurant, 2,090 sq. ft. of retail sales and services use, 250 guest rooms, 1,500 sq. ft. of meeting and recreation space, an indoor/outdoor swimming pool and parking for 115 vehicles.

The following approvals are required:

Certificate of Approval from Pioneer Square Preservation Board - Section 23.66,
Seattle Municipal Code (By the Department of Neighborhoods)

SEPA - to approve, condition or deny pursuant to - Section 25.05, Seattle Municipal
Code

SEPA DETERMINATION: ☐ Exempt ☐ DNS ☐ EIS

☒ DNS with conditions

☐ DNS involving non-exempt grading or demolition or
involving another agency with jurisdiction.

BACKGROUND DATA

Site and Vicinity Description

The rectangular shaped 19,200 sf site is bounded by First Avenue South, Royal Brougham Way and Occidental. The site currently is occupied by a Union 76 gas station with a mini-mart containing a coffee shop and fast food outlet. A portion of the minimart has an office above for the station owner. The site is nearly flat.

Immediately south is Safeco Field, home of the Seattle Mariners baseball team; kitty corner to the southwest is a large and successful brewpub operated by Pyramid Ale; to the west is the WOSCA site, currently a warehouse proposed for significant redevelopment; to the north is a parking lot; and to the east is the Washington State Exhibition Hall.

Structures immediately across adjacent streets include Safeco Field and Seahawk stadium. The Exhibition Hall is about 45' tall. The historic buildings within the Pioneer Square Preservation District, to the north, range from about 25' to about 75' tall.

First Avenue South is a six lane arterial with a c-curb median and, in some areas, parking on both sides. In front of the project site there is a bus stop and no on-street parking on First Ave. S. Royal Brougham Way contains six lanes, a partial c-curb median and is a state Highway, known as SR 519. Occidental, formerly a "railroad alley" is not clearly striped, but has approximately two lanes. Parking and loading take place on both sides in some areas, but not in front of the project site.

A variety of changes to Royal Brougham Way and Occidental have been proposed in recent times by a variety of agencies, however no definite plan or timetable has emerged. The monorail has proposed a significant station to the east. As noted above, a large project has been proposed for the WOSCA site to the west.

The subject site is zoned PSM-85-120' (Pioneer Square Mixed with an 85 to 120 foot height limit).

Proposal

This proposal consists of two parts: demolition of the existing gas station/minimart building and the future construction of a hotel building.

The building proposed in this application consists of a nine-story hotel structure with 250 guest rooms, 2,090 sq. feet of retail space, 5,250 sq. feet of restaurant space and on site parking for 115 vehicles. The project contemplates the grading of 15,000 cu. yards of material.

Associated with the proposal are canopies, bay windows and architectural elements of the roofline, which extend into First Avenue South, Royal Brougham Way and Occidental. The proposed canopies extend seven (7) feet into the right-of-way along First Avenue South, Royal Brougham Way and Occidental and provide weather protection to pedestrians walking along the

sidewalk. Beginning on the second floor, bay windows extend up to three (3) feet into the Right-of-Way along First Avenue South, Royal Brougham Way and Occidental, providing “eyes on the street” to enhance safety in the area. Various architectural elements associated with the roofline extend up to three (3) feet into the rights-of-ways.

Public Comment

Public notice of the project was first published on November 17, 2002. However, Notice of a Pioneer Square Preservation Board Meeting was published earlier prior to a meeting on August 28, 2002. This project was reviewed by the Architectural Review Committee of the Pioneer Square Preservation Board on August 28, 2002, November 27, 2002, January 29, 2003, April 30, 2003, and July 30, 2003 and by the Pioneer Square Preservation Board on February 19, 2003. The SEPA comment period for this project ended on November 13, 2002.

Comment letters were received on behalf of the Seattle Mariners, First and Goal, Inc., owners of the Seattle Seahawks and operators of Seahawk Stadium and from the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters. Most comments focused on truck loading, views from portions of Safeco Field Stadium, traffic, taxi and bus loading.

In addition, the applicant met with the representatives of the Seattle Mariners, representatives of Washington State Major League Baseball Stadium Public Facilities (owners of Safeco Field), representatives First and Goal (Operators of Seahawk Stadium), and The Pioneer Square Community Association.

PIONEER SQUARE PRESERVATION BOARD

This project was reviewed by the Architectural Review Committee of the Pioneer Square Preservation Board on August 28, 2002, November 27, 2002, January 29, 2003, April 30, 2003, and July 30, 2003 and by the Pioneer Square Preservation Board on February 19, 2003. During those meetings the architectural form of the building was worked out and the applicants repeatedly proposed a waiver of Seattle Land Use Code requirement of two loading docks. For the last meeting of the full board for Certificate of Approval, the request for loading dock waiver was withdrawn.

ANALYSIS – SEPA

The initial disclosure of the potential impacts from this project was made in the environmental checklist submitted by the applicant, signed and dated July 15, 2002, and annotated by this Department. This information in the checklist, supplemental information provided by the applicant (plans, a Transportation Study dated March 2003, comments from members of the community, and the experience of the lead agency with review of similar projects form the basis for this analysis and decision.

The SEPA Overview Policy (SMC 25.05.665) establishes the relationship between codes, policies, and environmental review. Specific policies for specific elements of the environment, certain neighborhood plans, and other policies explicitly referenced may serve as the basis for exercising substantive SEPA authority.

The Overview Policy states in part: “where City regulations have been adopted to address an environmental impact, it shall be presumed that such regulations are adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation (subject to some limitations).”

Under certain limitations/circumstances (SMC 25.05.665 D 1-7) mitigation can be considered. Thus, a more detailed discussion of some of the impacts is appropriate.

Short-Term Impacts

The following temporary or construction-related impacts are expected: decreased air quality due to suspended particulates from building activities and hydrocarbon emissions from construction vehicles and equipment; increased dust caused by construction activities; potential soil erosion and potential disturbance to subsurface soils during grading, excavation, and general site work; increased traffic and demand for parking from construction equipment and personnel; conflict with normal pedestrian movement adjacent to the site; increased noise; and consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources. Due to the temporary nature and limited scope of these impacts, they are not considered significant (SMC 25.05.794). Although not significant, these impacts are adverse, and in some cases, mitigation is warranted.

Several adopted City codes and/or ordinances provide mitigation for some of the identified impacts. Specifically these are: Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control Code (grading, site excavation and control of soil erosion through use of best management practices); Street Use Ordinance (watering streets to suppress dust, removal of debris, and obstruction of the pedestrian right-of-way); Building Code (construction measures in general); and the Noise Ordinance (construction noise). Compliance with these applicable codes and ordinances will reduce or eliminate short-term impacts to the environment and, with the exception of construction related noise impacts, they will be sufficient without conditioning pursuant to SEPA policies.

Construction Impacts

Construction traffic during construction will create the potential to adversely affect traffic flows and bus service on surrounding streets. The bus stop along the site on First Ave. S. can be moved either south of S. Royal Brougham Way or further north along First Ave. S. Staging areas for construction may be available on the private parking lot immediately to the north of the proposal site or may be obtainable under a permit from SDOT. A fenced staging area might be permitted by SDOT, but, would cause less traffic disruption if it were located off street. The applicants and their contractor will have to coordinate with SDOT which has approval and permitting authority. Impacts can be adequately mitigated by SDOT’s permit review, thus no SEPA conditioning to control construction appears warranted.

During events at the adjacent sports and exhibition venues the Seattle Police Department takes control of intersections and access to streets. Occidental Ave., for instance, is closed to all traffic other than a small amount generated by local residents and business who are issued season passes for the area, and is used for pedestrian flows before and after an event. When large crowds attend an event at either the ballpark or the stadium, traffic congestion occurs for about two hours before the start time and for about an hour afterwards. During these times it is likely access to the construction site will be prohibited.

Because the Seattle Police Department has and exercises authority over the use of streets in the vicinity during large events, conditioning pursuant to SEPA authority to control construction related traffic impacts during these events is unwarranted.

On street parking in the immediate area is limited. There is, however, ample parking available in nearby garages and surface lots as-well-as under the Alaskan Way Viaduct a block to the west. No SEPA conditioning of construction parking impacts is warranted.

Long-Term Impacts

Long-term or use related impacts are also anticipated from the proposal and include: some portions of views of the Olympics and/or Elliott Bay will be blocked from some portions of Safeco Field, increased demand on public services and utilities; increased light and glare; increased energy consumption; increased traffic due to truck loading and unloading, increased taxi cab use, and increased shuttle and bus use. These long-term impacts are not considered significant because they are minor in scope.

Notwithstanding the determination of nonsignificance, the following impacts merit more detailed discussion.

View blockage from portions of Safeco Field

The proposed structure would as viewed from within Safeco Field to the southeast become a foreground building within an existing view of downtown, Elliott Bay, Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains. The views which would include the proposed building would be the northernmost sections of the 300 level seating areas, the stair tower adjacent to those seats, and from the outdoor 300 level concourse along the western edge of the Ballpark and from Lookout Landing an area at the northernmost extent of that western concourse.

The applicant has voluntarily eliminated 18 desirable guest rooms from the top two floors in the south west portion of the building in order to preserve much of the view of the Olympic Mountains from Lookout Landing and the west concourse and also some other views from within Safeco Field of portions of the Port of Seattle container yard cranes and the sound and mountains beyond. In addition the applicant proposes to provide interesting items for baseball fans to see rather than a blacktop roof. The applicant will provide a year-round indoor/outdoor pool and landscaped terrace on the roof and the exercise room will be largely glass to continue views through to the Port of Seattle container yard cranes and the sound and mountains beyond.

The SEPA Public View Protection Policy protects views of the Olympic Mountains and Puget Sound from specifically designated public places and roads. Neither Safeco Field nor Seahawk's Stadium are on the list of designated public places.

The architecture of the proposed hotel has been carefully developed in consultation with the Pioneer Square Review Board. A two-story "cut" across the southwest corner of the building has been incorporated to preserve a notable element of view from Safeco Field. Roof top elements including a pool, deck and exercise club are incorporated.

No further SEPA conditioning is authorized or warranted.

Traffic

Traffic and parking impacts of the proposed development are studied and disclosed in the March 2003 Transportation Impact Analysis and August 27, 2003 and September 5, 2003 Memorandums updating the initial study, all prepared by The Transpo Group and contained in the project file.

The Traffic study was prepared in consultation with DPD personnel and as is typical with these studies initial estimates are made of trip generation and routes of vehicle travel to be expected. Intersections to be studied in the area are decided upon. The existing and expected project year level of service ("LOS") of these intersections is quantified and the expected project generated traffic is added to the model to predict LOS impacts of the project on the studied intersections.

The Traffic study indicates that the intersection of S. Royal Brougham Way and First Ave. S. will, as a result of the proposed project, in the P.M. peak hour increase in average delay from 54.8 to 56.7 seconds. As the threshold between LOS D and E is 55 seconds, the intersection LOS would deteriorate to a new, lower LOS level. In the A.M peak hour 1.2 seconds of added delay are anticipated with the intersection predicted to remain in the LOS D category.

The other studied intersections are less detrimentally affected by the proposed project and are predicted to remain at fully acceptable service levels.

Auto access to the site is proposed to be by separate in and out driveways from First Ave. S. to an internal auto court and below grade parking garage. Two loading docks will provide back-in access to the site for delivery trucks and an occasional full size bus. The two driveways on First Ave. S. are located as far north of the intersection with S. Royal Brougham Way as possible and must, for safety reasons, be designated as right turn and right turn out only. An existing "C" curb in the center of First Ave. S. will further insure that outbound movements are right, northbound only.

It will be necessary to install and maintain signage within the auto court, next to the exit driveway to indicate that right turns only are permitted. The project is conditioned pursuant to SEPA traffic policies to require such signage.

Parking

Parking for 115 vehicles is proposed for this 250-room hotel. This amount is well beyond the zoning minimum requirement of 63 spaces and below the zoning maximum of 153 spaces.

The Transpo Traffic study used ITE survey data for a non-convention hotel which are based on suburban hotels and assumed 100% occupancy to obtain a conservative (high) estimate of parking demand of 129 stalls. Using valet parking when necessary will allow this forecasted, worst case demand to be met entirely on site.

At the request of DPD personnel Transpo conducted a study of short-term drop-off, registration, town car, limo or taxi parking demand at two Seattle hotels, the South Lake Union Silver Cloud and the Lake Union Courtyard by Marriot. The August 27, 2003 Transpo Memo in the project file includes graphs of the data obtained for each hotel on a Friday and a Wednesday afternoon and evening. The Silver Cloud peaked twice at three vehicles and the Courtyard by Marriot peaked three times at six vehicles and three times at five vehicles.

The project proposed short term parking for nine vehicles in the auto court. This court is connected by a auto ramp and by passenger elevators to the underground parking garage where even more short term parking can be provided as necessary for hotel operations. This area was incorporated into the project during the MUP review process as it was realized that none of the surrounding street curbs were going to be available to meet this need of the functioning hotel.

Truck Loading Berths

Initially the applicant had requested a waiver, as allowed in the Pioneer Square Preservation district, from the requirement for two load berths. This waiver was opposed by SDOT. The Architectural Review Committee of the Pioneer Square Preservation Board voted not to recommend that the Pioneer Square Preservation Board approve the waiver. As such, the applicants retracted their request for waiver, amended their proposal and the project will provide the required loading berths on site as required by the City of Seattle code. The truck loading berths are located off of Occidental.

Bus and Shuttle loading.

Silver Cloud maintains shuttles and anticipates retrieving and delivering guest to the nearby train station as well as the airport by this method. The shuttles will be able to load onsite, either in the taxi and guest registration area at the lobby level or in the parking levels. The Silver Cloud Hotel clientele has not in the past utilized larger buses and the Silver Cloud management does not see a reason this would change with the Stadium Silver Cloud. However, the lobby level taxi and registration area as well as the load dock have ceiling heights which could accommodate a bus.

Pedestrian Improvement

This area has little pedestrian activity, except during large stadium and ballpark events, when huge volumes of pedestrians surge to and from events. Occidental is blocked off and becomes a

pedestrian street to accommodate the volumes. The current use as a gas station provides no pedestrian amenities, while challenging the pedestrian with numerous curbcuts and constant cross sidewalk traffic. This situation will be improved by the replacement of the gas station and minimart functions with a hotel use. Removal of curbcuts and the addition of street trees will make the area safer and more pleasant for pedestrians. The wide canopies proposed by the applicant on First Avenue South, Royal Brougham Way and Occidental and will provide weather protection, making these streets more comfortable for pedestrians. The proposal includes an on site space about twelve (12) feet by twenty-four (24) feet at the intersection of First Avenue South and Royal Brougham Way as a pedestrian refuge prior to crossing the intersection. The space will be covered to provide protection from the rain.

DECISION - SEPA

This decision was made after review by the responsible official on behalf of the lead agency of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the responsible department. This constitutes the Threshold Determination and form. The intent of this declaration is to satisfy the requirement of the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21.C), including the requirement to inform the public of agency decisions pursuant to SEPA.

- [X] Determination of Non-Significance. This proposal has been determined to not have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(C).
- [] Determination of Significance. This proposal has or may have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(C).

CONDITIONS - SEPA

For the Life of the Project

1. Install and maintain signage within the auto court, next to the exit driveway to indicate that right turns only are permitted.

Signature: (signature on file) Date: February 26, 2004
Scott Kemp, Senior Land Use Planner